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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for increasing student effort and achievement through the use of motivational strategies. The teaching staff at a high school in an upper-middle class urban area in Illinois noted that many students in a second-year high school Spanish class appeared unmotivated, demonstrated minimal academic effort, and earned poor grades. Analysis of the probable causes of this situation revealed high levels of student apathy and truancy, along with low levels of self-esteem. In addition, it was suspected that a lack of parental involvement, a lack of responsibility at home, and a lack of English language skills were contributing factors to poor motivation. Solutions strategies implemented to alleviate the problem included the use of cooperative groups, increased individual assistance by the teacher, extrinsic rewards for oral responses, and a varied teaching approach to maintain student interest. These strategies were found to help increase student motivation and performance. Five appendixes include copies of a teacher questionnaire, student surveys, and observation checklists. (Contains references.) (MDM)

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STUDENT MOTIVATION IN THE CLASSROOM

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master's of Arts in Teacher and Leadership

Saint Xavier University - IRI
Field-Based Master's Program

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Abstract

AUTHOR: Chuck McGonigal SITE: Rockford II
DATE: May, 1994

TITLE: Strategies For Motivating Students To Learn

ABSTRACT: This report describes a program for improving student effort and achievement through motivational strategies. It will focus on second year high school level Spanish classes in an upper-middle class, large urban community, located in north central Illinois. The problem was originally noted by the teaching staff who found many students to be unmotivated and under-achieving, while demonstrating minimal academic effort. Poor grades confirmed these observations.

Analysis of the probable cause data revealed student apathy, truancy, and low self-esteem. In addition, it was suspected that a lack of parental involvement, a lack of responsibility at home, and a lack of English skills, as well as outside interests, were contributing factors to poor motivation.

Solution strategies combined with an analysis of the problem setting included plans to improve student motivation, specifically: cooperative groups, individual help by teacher, extrinsic rewards for oral response, parent involvement, and a varied teaching approach to maintain student interest.

All sy nptoms of the original problem of lack of motivation were reduced. Students improved in social skills and work habits and an increase in oral responses was noted.

Chapter 1

Student Motivation In The Classroom

General Statement of Problem

The second year high school Spanish class exhibits undesirable levels of motivation as evidenced by low effort, low achievement, teacher observation, and colleague observation.

Immediate Problem Context

There are 1,627 students enrolled in this four year high school. The school's student population consists of 74 percent White, 19 percent Black, two percent Hispanic, four percent Asian, and one percent Native American. Ten percent of the students come from low income families. Seventy percent of the students are enrolled in college preparatory classes, 20 percent in general education, and ten percent in vocational education. Ninety percent of the students graduate from high school. The student attendance rate for the high school is 90 percent with a 23 percent mobility rate of students who enter or leave school during the year. There are 119 chronic truants who are absent without valid cause more than ten percent of the 180 school days.

The school administrative staff consists of one principal and three assistant principals. There are 120 teaching staff members, five of whom are special education instructors. In addition, there are five counselors, one in-school psychologist, and one nurse, all of which are full-time. Also, there are two uniformed police on duty during the school day.

The class size average for the high school is 20. The class size average for Spanish is 29. The racial and ethnic mixture in the class is proportional to the entire school population. About 60 percent of our students go on to college. There

are four languages offered at our school: Spanish, French, German, and Latin. There are eight foreign language teachers in the foreign language department.

The Surrounding Community

The population of the community is approximately 140,000. Total public secondary school enrollment in the district is 6,226. The community is located in north central Illinois. The district has four public high schools serving the community. The attendance area for the problem-setting high school is the northeast quadrant of the city where the high school is located and a central west side area of about 1/4 the size of the northeast quadrant. The northeast section consists mainly of upper-middle to upper income families while the west side area is composed mainly of lower-middle to lower income families. Most of the minority student population comes from the west side area of the city. These students are bussed in to meet the Federal desegregation guidelines.

Regional and National Context of Problem

Research indicates that motivation is a significant educational problem. "Students who are unmotivated to learn, do not learn." Slavin (1984 p. 53). It is a self-evident truth that motivation for learning is a major national concern. Parents and educators alike strongly advocate that classroom teachers should be knowledgeable about motivation. Motivation here refers to a student's interest in learning, and in the acquisition of knowledge, and in mastering skills. Most teachers, regardless of their theoretical background, accept the premise that learning cannot occur without motivation. Nevertheless, the common problem is how to facilitate student motivation.

"Student motivation to learn is an acquired competence developed through general experience, but stimulated most directly through modeling,

communication of expectations, and direct instruction or socialization by significant others, especially parents and teachers." (Brophy, 1984 p. 40).

The problems related to student motivation are equally compelling on the regional level. In the immediate problem-setting classroom apathy, truancy, low assignment grades and unacceptable behavior, have either been experienced, observed, or recorded. These are specific indicators of a lack of motivation. Teacher insight into every one of these indicators can contribute to the development of different teaching strategies, each of which may have the potential to enhance motivation to learn.

Chapter 2

Problem Evidence and Probable Cause

Problem Background

The data on the national and regional context of the problems associated with student motivation, painted a compelling picture of the need for attention. The 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk, concluded, "The Educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity." (Deci, 1985 p. 52). Glasser, founder and President of the Institute for Reality Therapy summarized, "Until students have a much clearer idea of what a good education is and how it can be gained from what they are asked to do in school, they will not work hard." (Glasser, 1989 p. 24).

Locally, the motivation of students has been addressed by the Renaissance program. At our school, it is titled "Carpe Diem" which is Latin for "seize the day". In this program, students are rewarded for good grades, grade improvement, and perfect attendance through extrinsic rewards such as special privileges, prizes given at assemblies, cash awards, and food. An average of 844 or 52.1 percent of our students per nine week term receive some type of an award. The total number of students eligible for awards was 1,620. This program has been highly successful.

Problem Evidence

Both subjective and objective means were used to document the problem on the high school level. A questionnaire was administered to foreign language teachers in the local setting. (Appendix A) Procedures for collecting this data were subjective, largely derived from personal observation. Seven of the teachers

surveyed provided objective information to estimate the characteristics of motivation. Many teachers perceived student motivation as poor. Characteristics of motivation perceived by teachers as deficient in students are as follows: interest in the task at hand, an awareness of why learning is important, lack of parental support, self-esteem, taking responsibility for learning, and behavior. This judgement was based on behavioral objectives of what the student will do, perform, or achieve on completing numerous planned instructional activities. Activities observed by teachers, that were difficult for students due to low levels of motivation are as follows: oral responses, higher thinking skills, listening, following directions, and comprehension. Teacher survey of estimated time average student stayed on aural-oral task during a one week period of instructional time yielded qualitative data. (Figure 1)

Upon enrolling a student in school, parents must provide information on a school entrance form. The form requests that parents list family members, occupation, and marital status. From the school entrance form, it was possible to determine which students lived with both natural parents and which students lived in other family configurations. (Figure 2) Seventy percent live with both parents, and thirty percent live in single-parent homes.

While the students' record did not reveal their parents' income level, some related information was available that specified parents' occupation. Not all the families were well-off at the time of the study; indeed, some families relied on public assistance.

While these findings of the students' families are hardly conclusive, the effect of family life on school success obviously must be considered. Often the essential motivational factors are out of a teacher's reach, even out of the school's.

Figure 1

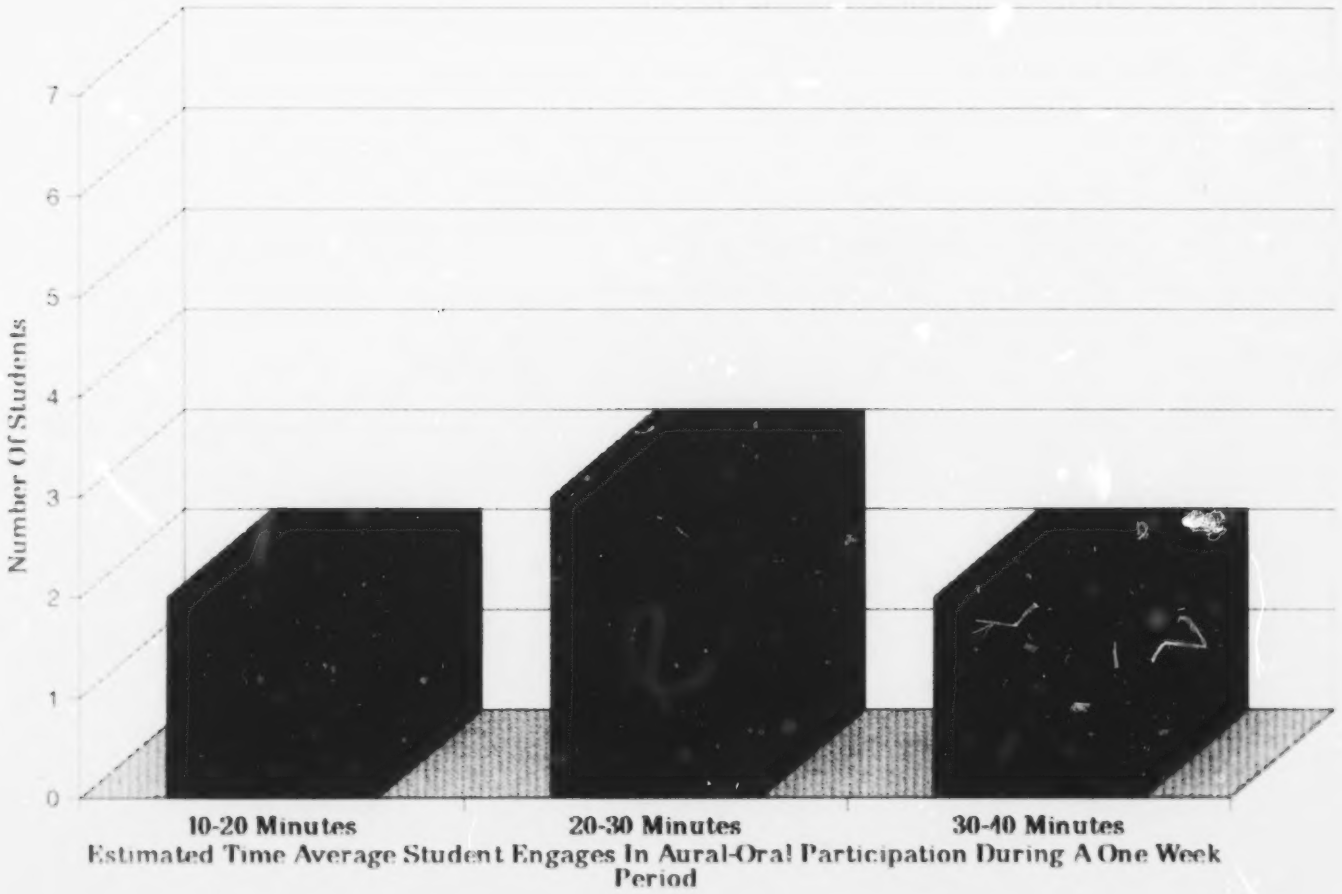

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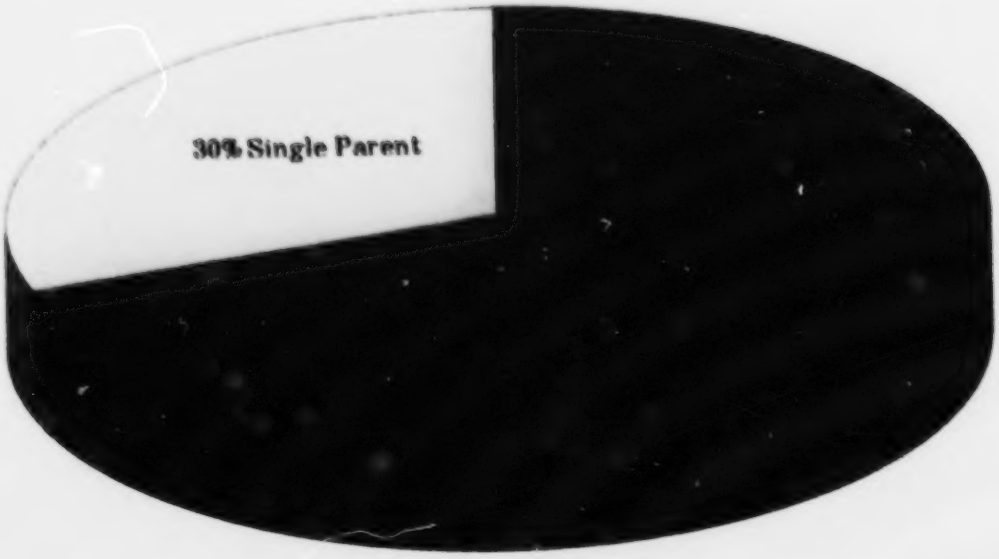
Figure 2



Summary of Family Configuration in Problem Setting

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The research of Reginald Clark (1990) supplies evidence that parents appear to be the primary influence on a child's motivation to learn.

> Like effective schools, effective families have a set of easy-to-identify characteristics. These cut across family income, education, and ethnic background. They remain true for single and two-parent households and for families with working and non-working mothers. Effective families display a number of positive attitudes and behaviors toward their children which help them to succeed in school and in life.
> (Wlodkowski, 1990, p. 15)

A review of report cards was also conducted. (Report cards included teacher comments and ratings of students' ability. It was clear that, as a group, many students needed improvement in work habits.) Summaries of teachers' comments on progress reports confirmed students had a difficult time working and cooperating well with others. In addition, using time wisely and putting forth best effort was another concern.

Questions were asked concerning motivation in special populations. To what extent were low-motivated students identified as needing special/differentiated instruction? Were these students more likely to need extra help to improve their academic skills?

A review of the record revealed that 8.75 percent of the population setting were enrolled or had been in a program for the learning-disabled or had received extra reading instruction. (The evidence of low-motivation among the learning-disabled and the number of low-motivated students, were found to be very similar to the total school population.)

A summary of the data used to document the discrepancy on the high school level indicated that a need for remediation existed. These data supported teachers' perceptions as reported in the questionnaires and confirmed the teachers' observation of low-motivation. Effort and achievement were areas of critical need for many students. Self-esteem was problematic for some students.

Probable Causes of Problem

Data to indicate probable cause factors were gathered from three sources within the setting. A class of 30 students within the setting was administered a questionnaire. (Appendix C) The intent of the questionnaire was to determine students' attitude toward classroom activities, so that needed adjustments could be made. Some information concerning attitudes can be discovered by observation but a more complete evaluation was supplemented by reports of the students' feelings and opinions. It was evident from the student survey that there were many outside influences and interests that competed for students' time, time might have been spent doing homework. Many indicated they were concerned about their grades but did little to improve on them. Other concerns such as sports, friends, and entertainment seemed to be of greater value.

The data presented in Table 1 summarizes the area of oral language. A checklist was used to evaluate oral responses with a rating scale recording the frequency of occurrence (e.g., often, sometimes, not yet). (Appendix D) Direct observation by a colleague for a thirty minute interval was utilized to gather data.

Table 1
The Number of Students Exhibiting Stated Foreign Language Skills
October, 1993

Observable Indicators	Often	Sometimes	Not Yet
Understands question	5	3	5
Formulates quick response	3	2	4
Uses correct response	4	4	6
Uses correct pronunciation	3	6	3
Uses correct verb	3	1	4

A summary of the probable cause data gathered from the problem-site permitted the following conclusions: students needed to develop self-concept and to overcome lack of success in learning. At the central point of dealing with lack of success in learning is an interlocking of the efforts of the student, the teacher and the parents. Lack of effort may be symptomatic if the student does not feel successful, has a fear of failure, or lacks a sense of self-determination and challenge in learning. The teacher needs to actively model and share a value for learning with enthusiasm.

Probable cause data from the literature focused on different theoretical positions, and in many instances, they contain a significant amount of overlap and common rationale. What is the relationship between motivation and learning? Glasser (1986) stresses that if a student feels no sense of belonging in school, no sense of involved in caring and concern, that child will pay little attention to academic subjects. He further believes basic to control-theory is the concept that our genes instruct us to attempt to survive, to love and belong, and to struggle for power, fun and freedom. If what is offered in school is not seen by students as related to one or more of these needs, they will struggle against, and/or withdraw from any or all of a curriculum that is not satisfying.

Wlodkowski, (1986, p. 11) answers with a metaphor: "Facilitating motivation in students is like taking a car trip from New York to California; you can have all the money necessary, buy a new car, make plans well in advance, organize the needed supplies, make the proper reservations, and have everyone, including yourself ready to go, but if you lose the ignition key (or get a flat tire, or take a wrong turn, or run out of gas, or lose your money, etc.), you can't go anywhere." Wlodkowski stresses that with student motivation, when only one thing goes wrong, the entire process may come to a complete stop. He further

explains that the best lesson plans, the greatest materials, a highly motivated teacher, or the newest curriculum cannot guarantee that students will want to learn continuously.

Student apathy, indifference and under achievement are typical precursors of school abandonment. "Nothing succeeds like success." (Clifford, 1991, p. 30) has driven educational practices for several decades. Absolute success for students has become the means and the end. She further states that success has been given higher priority than learning, and it has obstructed learning.

The continual outcry for change in educational theories as cited by McDaniel (1984) contributes to the challenge of instructional motivation. Educators are overburdened by the expectation to improve their classroom environment, to mediate social problems, and to produce higher achievement test score, while maintaining excellence in motivational techniques.

Hunter (1982) stresses the factors that affect motivation; students' families, neighborhoods, former teachers, or previous experiences in the same content have all had an affect on the motivation of students. She explains that these factors are beyond control and are part of the students' past and it's only in the present that educators can make changes. She goes on to say that relevance variety, etc. affect motivation.

A summary of probable causes for the problem gathered from the site, and from the literature included the following elements:

1. students had inaccurate perceptions of their ability which causes low self-esteem,
2. students may feel unsuccessful,
3. students had an inaccurate understanding of individual accountability,
4. teacher behavior needed to communicate high expectation,
5. teacher behavior needed to address personalized instruction,

6. interest in the curriculum needed to be addressed,
7. a positive climate to nurture educational growth needed to be developed,
8. achieving quality in the classroom was necessary.

Chapter 3

The Solution Strategy

Review of the Literature

Analysis of probable cause data suggested many reasons that affect motivation in the classroom. A number of well-researched ideas and findings can be applied to learning situations that have the ability to increase students' effort and intent to learn. The available knowledge contains a significant amount of common rationale. However, because motivation is complex and is the subject of many different theoretical positions, the vast number of variables that affect learning make it difficult to isolate motivation and to understand its true impact on learning. In addition to this information, research literature suggested the following probable causes: parental interest in achievement, outside influences, students' perception of their abilities and chances of success, students' interest in the task at hand and level of difficulty, students' previous experiences in the same content area, and the quality of instruction and type of setting, may all contribute to undesirable levels of motivation.

The literature search for solution strategies was suggested by these probable cause data. Analysis of these data suggested that a series of questions related to teacher planning for learning experience, learner behavior, and teacher behavior should be addressed.

The questions related to teacher planning for learning experience included: 1) What can the teacher do to guarantee a positive student attitude for an activity? 2) How does the teacher best meet the needs of students through an activity? 3) Are there activities that will continuously stimulate students? 4) How is the affective or emotional climate for an activity a positive one for students? 5) How

does an activity increase or affirm students' feelings of competence? 6) What is the reinforcement that an activity provides for students?

The questions related to the learner were primarily that of perception. Specifically, students' perception of ability, interest in task, and chances of success: 1) What are the students' feelings toward the teacher, subject and learning situation? 2) What is the students' sense of worth and capabilities in the learning situation? 3) How well does the student expect to do in the learning situation? 4) How does the content of a student's learning relate to what he/she values? 5) How is the student aware at the completion of learning that he/she is accountable for that learning?

Teacher behavior questions included: 1) What strategies should teachers employ which will positively affect motivation? 2) How can teachers most effectively support student motivation by facilitating a grading procedure? 3) How can teachers affect student motivational levels? 4) Which teaching strategies contribute to continuous and interactive motivational techniques?

These questions pertaining to motivation suggested that appropriate measures within the literature search should include an elaborate development of teaching strategies that promote student involvement and success.

Wlodkowski (1986) advocated that to enhance any learning activity, there are three critical periods during which specific motivational strategies will have a significant impact on student motivation. (Figure 3) The three critical periods are: 1) Beginning -- when the student enters and starts the learning process. 2) During -- when the student is involved in the body or main content of the learning process. 3) Ending -- when the student is finishing or completing the learning process. For each of the three critical periods, there are two general motivational factors that serve as categories for strategies that can be applied with maximum impact during those periods of time. They are:

Beginning: 1. Attitude - the students' attitude toward the general learning environment, teacher, subject matter, and self.

2. Needs - the basic needs within the student at the time of learning.

During: 1. Stimulation - the stimulation process affecting the student via the learning experience.

2. Affect - the affective or emotional experience of the student while learning.

Ending: 1. Competence - the competence value for the student that is a result of the learning behavior.

2. Reinforcement - the reinforcement value attached to the learning experience for the student.

The six general factors serve as a way for teachers to understand and evaluate student motivation. In addition, Wlodkowski (1986) stressed that in using these factors, teachers can find motivational strategies regarding what to do. They are methods or techniques that may be helpful to the teacher and student. He believes that the crucial question is in how they are employed.

McDaniel (1984) stated that inviting school success with students is the key to student motivation to learn. He believes that students behave in accordance with a teacher's perception of their ability. Cooperative learning strategies promotes higher levels of self-esteem and also promotes the student's feelings of belonging. Furthermore, he believes that when students learn the joy of working productively together toward common goals, motivation inevitably improves. Much of the research on school effectiveness points to the importance of high expectations for students. High expectations address the importance of self-fulfilling predictions and of teacher behavior's that communicate high expectations. In addition, instructional motivation depends on a teacher's skill in getting students to attend to the objective, skills, knowledge, and values that

constitute any given lesson. McDaniel (1984) suggests that teachers who are good motivators know that their interactions and transactions with students are central to a successful lesson. Effective teachers use their motivational skills to develop a positive climate that nurtures the educational growth of students.

Glasser (1986) recommended that schools must concern themselves less with security and survival and more with needs for friendship, freedom, fun and power. He advocates teachers must offer students an education which students can see will satisfy both their immediate and future needs. These insights, according to Glasser, are introduced through control theory, a new psychology which explains that people are motivated from within themselves and that what happens outside us is never the cause of anything we do. He further explains that teachers need to be trained in the use of learning-teams of two to four students that creates an enthusiastic learning environment. In comparing learning-teams to the traditional approach he points out the variance. They are as follows with the traditional approach in bold type.

Students can gain a sense of belonging by working together in learning-teams of two to five students. The teams should be selected by the teacher so that they are made up of a range of low, middle, and high achievers.

Students work as individuals.

Belonging provides the initial motivation for students to work, and as they achieve academic success, students who had worked previously begin to sense that knowledge is power and they want to work harder.

Unless they succeed as individuals, there is no motivation to work and no ability to gain the sense that knowledge is power.

The stronger students find it need-fulfilling to help the weaker ones because they want the power and friendship that go with a high-performing team.

Stronger students hardly even know the weaker ones.

The weaker students find it is need-fulfilling to contribute as much as they can to the team effort because now whatever they can contribute helps. When they worked alone, a little effort got them nowhere.

Weaker students contribute little to the class initially and less as they go along.

Students need not depend only on the teacher. They can (and are urged to) depend a great deal on themselves, their own creativity and other members of their team. All of this frees them from dependence on the teacher and, in doing so, gives them both power and freedom.

Almost all students, except for a few very capable ones, depend completely on the teacher. They almost never depend on each other and there is little incentive to help each other. Helping each other now is called cheating.

Learning-teams can provide the structure that will help students to get past the superficiality that plagues our schools today. Without this structure, there is little chance for any but a few students to learn enough in depth to make the vital knowledge-is-power connection.

The students' complaints that they are bored is valid. Bored students will not work.

The teams are free to figure out how to convince the teacher and other students (and parents) that they have learned the material. Teachers will encourage teams to offer evidence (other than tests) that the material has been learned.

The teacher (or the school system) decides how the students are to be evaluated and they are rarely encouraged to do any more than to study for the teacher-designed tests.

Teams will be changed by the teacher on a regular basis so that all students will have a chance to be on a high-scoring team. On some assignments, but not all, each student on the team will get the team score. High-achieving students

who might complain that their grade suffered when they took a team score will tend consistently to be on high-scoring teams, so as individuals they will not suffer in the long run. This will also create incentive regardless of the strength of any team.

Students compete only as individuals, and who wins and who loses is apparent in most classes, except some honors classes, after only a few weeks of school.

Hunter (1982) recommends that teachers become enlightened and proficient in the use of the professional techniques which have the capability to expand and influence students' learning. While some factors are beyond our control, she supports five factors a teacher needs to master and then temper in the classroom. The five factors which have the potential to increase students' achievement are as follows: 1) Level of Concern - The teacher needs to become perceptive on how to raise or lower the level of concern of a student, and when innovation is needed to heighten learning achievement. 2) Feeling Tone - The teacher needs to have an understanding of three feeling tones (pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral). In addition, a teacher needs to be aware of when to facilitate, devise and when they are required for students to reach an accomplishment. 3) Success - The feeling of success for a student is facilitated by the level of difficulty of the learning task and the teaching skill which will enable students learning more apparent. Both factors are skills that are developed and mastered by an effective teacher. 4) Interest - The teacher can further students' interest in the learning task in two ways. First by utilizing students' interest in themselves and second by using innovation and producing a strong impression on the senses to attract students' attention to learn. 5) Knowledge of Results - The knowledge of results is information that the student receives about the quality of his/her performance on a given task. In general, results of students' performance allows students to evaluate their progress, maintain student effort toward realistic goals, correct

student errors without delay and communicates direct encouragement from teachers.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is another factor which represents the relationship of the learning goal achieved. Intrinsic refers to the pleasure or value associated with an activity itself. In intrinsic motivation the action is considered the primary reason for the performance of the behavior. Extrinsic motivation emphasizes the value an individual places on the ends of an action and the probability of reaching those ends. In extrinsic motivation the goal rather than the action is considered the reason for the performance of the behavior. Hunter (1982) further states the five factors within the teachers control, influence student motivational levels to move from completely extrinsic motivation (they have to learn it) to more intrinsic motivation (they enjoy learning it).

As pointed out in Chapter 2 the families' effect on their children's motivation to learn has an impact at every stage of development, lasting through the high school years and beyond. (Wlodkowski and Jaynes, 1990:15) and Clark (1990) stated what makes the difference for well-motivated high achievers are that they come from "effective families". Although it is difficult to precisely assess family impact on children, it should be noted that parents display a number of positive attitudes and behaviors toward their children which help them to succeed in school and life. Clark lists the following suggestions of effective families. (Wlodkowski and Jaynes, 1990:16-18)

1. A feeling of control over their lives: Effective parents believe they can make a difference in their children's academic and personal development. They do not feel overwhelmed by their circumstances. Even when they live in poverty, they keep a hopeful, reassuring outlook. They do not feel sorry for themselves. They not only listen attentively to the problems of their own children, they also have time

for others. Children know their homes are a safe place to gather for support and understanding.

2. A frequent communication of high expectations to children: They believe their children are personally responsible for attending classes, listening carefully, and participating actively in order to learn. Their parental folk wisdom says, "You have to go to school if you want to get ahead." Although they do not demand that their children continue schooling beyond twelfth grade, they frequently emphasize their expectation that their children participate in some form of secondary education or training. Their children know that wanting to be successful in school is the reasonable and right attitude to have.
3. A family dream of success for the future: They have a vision of personal success for each child and a plan for making their dreams come true. The dream that most families contemplate combines good health and material well-being (a good job, nice home) with an active spiritual life and service to the community. They talk with their children about the specific steps they can take, both now and later, to realize their dream. Their children know that getting a good education is a major part of this plan.
4. A view of hard work as a key to success: Effective parents tell their children, in many ways, that personal effort is the key to success. They emphasize that it is not primarily fate or genes or good looks that make the difference, but specifically, hard work. Their children believe that success will come from their own inner motivation and commitment.
5. An active, not a sedentary, life style: They discourage idleness and help guide their children's time into wholesome activities. They are

continually on the lookout for academic development programs and part-time work for their children. They encourage their children to take advantage of school and community resources. These parents know where their children are and whom they are with; they encourage them to associate with children who have similar values regarding work and school. Their children tend to view life as something you participate in, to give as well as receive its blessings.

6. Twenty-five to thirty-five home-centered learning hours per week: Some of these hours include time devoted to homework or leisure-time reading. But these families view learning more broadly and consider such activities as hobbies, games, household chores, part-time jobs, sports, organized youth programs, family outings, and even creative daydreaming as constructive.
7. A view of the family as a mutual support system and problem-solving unit: From the early years, effective parents give every child some household responsibility appropriate to his or her age. Often, in single-parent and two-career families, older children act as advisers to their younger brothers and sisters. Children realize they are needed by and can contribute to their families.
8. Clearly understood household rules, consistently enforced: Effective parents justify the limits and sanctions they set by citing ethical standards (the Golden Rule, for example) or superior knowledge (their own experience). In disputes or conflicts, they usually give their children opportunities to find resolutions, and generally proceed in a fair and loving way. In general, they put more energy into finding worthwhile activities for their children than into keeping their children in line.

9. Frequent contact with teachers: They are likely often to be involved in parent-teacher groups and activities. They check on their children's progress and generally cooperate with teachers. They want to know how they can support school lessons through home activities. The children see their parents and teachers as a unified force helping them to be successful in school.
10. An emphasis on spiritual growth: They encourage and inspire children to strive for inner peace and love. They connect satisfying personal needs with the use of talents and energies to help others. The children believe they can gain the strength to overcome fears and handle conflicts and stress.

A summary of the literature search which addressed the questions related to learner behavior, teacher behavior, and teacher planning for learning experience suggested the following strategies.

1. Establish a motivational objective or purpose.
2. Use methods and/or materials to draw student interest to the new learning activity or topic.
3. Change the style as well as the content of the learning activities.
4. Use strategies that enable students to work together productively toward a common goal.
5. Create a learning environment that is positive.
6. Establish a relationship with the student by building relationships and better attitudes.
7. Help students experience a willingness to learn.
8. Ensure student expectation for success.
9. Continual communication with students on knowledge of results.

The series of solutions suggestions which related to learner behavior, teacher behavior, and teacher planning for learning experience posed a challenge. On the basis of the literature search, many ideas and techniques that more positively enhance student motivation for learning was available to teachers and schools. One of the most significant problems to face is how to combine all the elements into a whole and produce a manageable approach for daily instruction. In the long term, the question of learner behavior had to be addressed. In the short term, a more efficient use of time, as it was currently allocated, had to be designed. Teacher planning revision was clearly called for. A wider variety of motivational strategies to increase student effort with emphasis on carry-over activities had to be offered. Inservice training had to be increased to address the issues of motivation.

The second year Spanish class at Guilford High School was at a critical point on how to better facilitate student motivation for learning. There are numerous well-researched choices that can heighten motivation. Personal teaching style, situational demands, student differences, cultural values, subject matter, and tradition will often be criteria for making these selections. Although there is no best way to teach, there are better ways that deserve to be considered and applied for the benefit of the students.

Project Outcomes

The first terminal objective of the problem intervention related to learner behavior was related to the discrepancy data presented in Chapter 2. The checklists related to learner behavior and oral responses indicated a majority of the students needed improvement in motivation. Probable cause and solution strategies, presented in Chapter 2, suggested the need for improving teacher behavior and teacher planning for learning experience in the Spanish

curriculum, and for implementation of teaching strategies to raise student motivational levels. Therefore:

> As a result of teacher planning for learning experience, and of anticipated changes in teacher behavior during the 1993-1994 school year, the students in second year Spanish will improve in the areas of effort and achievement, as measured by teacher and colleague observations, student conferences, checklists, and non-graded reports to parents on effort and achievement.

Probable causes gathered from the literature suggested a need to provide experiences from which each student can derive a positive self-esteem, and allow for personal self-value. In addition, probable cause data gathered from the site indicated students had an inaccurate understanding of their own consequences toward personal achievement, and were unable or unwilling to translate stated accountability for improving effort. Therefore, the second terminal objective stated that:

> As a result of changes in learner behavior beginning in September 1993 and extending through June 1994, second year Spanish students will increase their knowledge of social skills as measured by teacher and colleague observation, checklists, student conferences, and progress reports to parents.

In order to accomplish the terminal objectives, the following intermediate objectives defined the major strategic procedures proposed for problem resolution.

1. As a result of inservice training and colleague observation and feedback, the teacher will be able to describe and use those behaviors which are most effective in motivating student achievement, and in creating a comfortable climate for learning.

2. As a result of changes in the use of grades, beginning in October of 1993 and extending through March of 1994, the second year Spanish class and parents will be better able to evaluate their progress.

3. As a result of self-esteem development and implementation, occuring during the fall of 1993 and

extending through March of 1994, the second year Spanish class will include an increased amount and a greater variety of activity specifically related to self-esteem development, as measured by teacher observation and as reflected by teacher lesson plans.

4. As a result of including reflective journals as a part of motivational strategies, the teacher will be able to better assess student progress.

5. As a result of implementation of base and task groups during October of 1993 through March of 1994, the second year Spanish class will be able to identify, practice, and verbalize appropriate social skills, as measured by checklists, and teacher observation.

6. As a result of teacher observation, student conferences, and feedback, the teacher will be able to use and implement those strategies which are most effective in motivating student achievement.

Proposal Solution Components

The major elements of the approach used to reduce the discrepancy fell into three categories; those strategies designed to increase motivational levels; interventions to improve development of social skills and self-esteem; and plans to improve the problem setting, thereby facilitating the interventions, and making more probable the sought-after improvements. These elements related to the terminal objectives in that they attempted to effect a change in motivational levels and the knowledge and effects of motivation. Data indicated a low level of motivation for the student population in question. Lack of student interest in the task at hand and an inappropriate level of difficulty for the task are underlying probable causes for the problem. In addition, student perception of their ability and chances for success, type of setting and the quality of instruction, may contribute to undesirable levels of motivation.

Chapter 4

Action Plan For Implementing The Solution Strategy

Description of Problem Resolution Activities

The action plan is designed to address two major solution components: learner behavior and teacher planning for learning experience which focuses on immediate needs and remediates past practices.

The learner behavior phase of the implementation plan will begin in September of 1993 and continue throughout the school year. The purpose of this component is: to improve effort and achievement, and to enhance self-concept. In utilizing cooperative learning techniques there will be an increased awareness of social skills.

The teacher planning for learning experience phase of the plan will begin in the fall of 1993 with teacher preparation in the immediate classroom setting. Using assessment data collected at the end of the previous school year, the teacher will design motivational techniques which will be implemented into the classroom in the fall of 1993. The teacher will assume the primary role in its implementation and anticipated change in teacher behavior will act as the impetus for adjusting teaching strategies.

The implementation plan is presented below in outline form and in chronological order, allowing for the overlapping of strategies over time.

1. Checklists by the teacher will be included as a method of assessment.
   - A. Who: The teacher will collect the data.
   - B. What: A teacher made checklist of each student will be kept pertinent to work and social skills.
   - C. When: The data will be gathered quarterly on an individual basis.

D. How: The teacher will monitor improvement in student behavior.

E. Why: The checklists will be a tool of comparison at the beginning of the research to the final results.

2. Reflective journals by the students will be included as a method of assessment.

A. Who: Each second year Spanish student will be responsible for creating a reflective journal.

B. What: A work compilation will be collected, reviewed and recorded pertaining to areas of study.

C. When: Each week two-three learning activities will be chosen.

D. How: Students will choose their own area of concern to reflect upon.

E. Why: Reflective journals will be used to help students assess their achievement.

3. Increase use of motivation through cooperative learning.

A. Who: The teacher will be responsible for this strategy.

B. What: Student motivation will be increased through cooperative learning techniques employed in the classroom setting.

C. When: The implementation of cooperative learning strategies will begin in October 1993 and continue through June 1994. Cooperative learning groups will be formed two times per week for a minimum of 30 minutes per day.

D. How: Materials will be distributed to cooperative groups. Each cooperative group will consist of four students. Each member of the group will assume responsibility for one role as group

member such as recorder, checker, worrier, and encourager. Students will be instructed in the duties of each role before cooperative learning groups are formed. Cooperative learning techniques along with problem solving techniques will be utilized.

E. Why: To increase student motivation and improve social skills and achievement in the subject area.

4. Obtain an objective input from colleague observation on the status of classroom motivation.

A. Who: The teacher will provide the criteria by which a colleague will observe the teacher's classroom.

B. What: Aspects of classroom behavior will be observed and documented.

C. When: Observation will occur at three different times during the course of the action plan: at the onset, during, and at the conclusion.

D. How: The colleague will receive a checklist of observable behaviors and after viewing classroom activities for thirty minutes, document the findings.

E. Why: The product will be used as a reference for the teacher during the school year, thus ensuring a variety of activities of appropriate level and duration.

5. The teacher will keep a journal of strategies used, student observations and his reflections.

A. Who: The second year Spanish teacher will implement this plan.

B. What: The teacher will keep written observations of the results of strategies implemented and students' progress and behavior.

C. When: Entries will be added weekly.

D. How: The teacher will keep an account of students' verbalizations and actions and his reactions to each of those areas.

E. Why: The journal will enable the teacher to get a whole picture of the sequence and scope of the classroom pulse. It serves as documented evidence of what works and what does not work. It allows a more accurate basis for reflection.

6. Modeling will be used as an integral instructional tool to promote desire student behaviors.

A. Who: The teacher will set a positive classroom environment.

B. What: The teacher will dynamically model inflection and vocal intonation, and gesticulation.

C. When: Modeling will be infused throughout the school day for the entire school year.

D. How: The teacher will provide a positive environment through all modalities.

E. Why: This strategy will enable students to experience a new motivational climate for learning, where students will be able to improve and maintain positive changes in learning behavior.

Methods of Assessment

Several data collection methods will be used to evaluate the efforts of implementing motivational strategies. Improvement in self-esteem will be measured through the use of reflective journals. These reflective journals will be utilized by the target group in the fall of 1993, and the results will be compared to the end result in the spring of 1994.

The ability of the students to engage in appropriate social skills will be documented through formal observations and journal entries based on informal observation and conversations with students.

Changes in teacher planning for learning experiences will be determined through the use of colleague observation. The number of language skills will be recorded and compared at the conclusion of the research.

Chapter 5

Evaluation of Results and Process

Implementation History

The terminal objectives of the intervention addressed the low levels of motivation and lack of work and social skills. A review of their grades and observation indicated that many students were in need of remediation. Therefore, the terminal objectives stated:

> As a result of teacher planning for learning experience, and of anticipated changes in teacher behavior during the 1993-1994 school year, the students in second year Spanish will improve in the areas of effort and achievement, as measured by teacher and colleague observations, student conferences, checklists, and non-graded reports to parents on effort and achievement.
>
> As a result of changes in learner behavior beginning in September 1993 and extending through March 1994, second year Spanish students will increase their knowledge of social skills as measured by teacher and colleague observation, checklists, student conferences, and progress reports to parents.

Presentation and Analysis of Project Results

The following action tools were placed during the intervention phase of the project. Each action will be described and summarized. Data will be illustrated by tables and graphs. A reflective summary is presented at the end of this chapter.

The development of a checklist to address the lack of work and social skills in the second year Spanish class at Guilford High School began with a review of the assessment data. This activity took place at the very beginning of the 1993-1994 school year. During the year the teacher utilized direct observation as a method of collecting data in the areas of work and social skills. This checklist was used to

evaluate performance skills with a rating scale recording the frequency of occurrence (e.g., frequently, sometimes, not yet). This collection of data was gathered quarterly on an individual basis, once in November, once in January, and again in March. Students were placed in cooperative groups and the teacher circulated throughout the graphs, observing and listening for the stated work and social skills. The students were in cooperative groups for approximately thirty minutes. The observations consisted of checking communication and listening skills, staying on task, contributing to group, and understanding concepts. One of the tasks assigned for one of the observations was from our workshop which dealt with a review section covering verbs. Another assignment was a story in Spanish from our textbooks which the students had to read and answer questions about. The third observation was another assignment from the workbook on which they had to agree on the answer and then write their answers on the board. Tables three, four, and five indicate the percentage of skills exhibited.

From the three tables of assessed skills, analysis revealed the following: all of the social skills showed an increase. The most dramatic improvements occured in the areas of communication and staying on task.

Tables 3, 4, 5
Teacher Assessment of Percentage of Students
Exhibiting Stated Skills
November, 1993

Social Skill Assessed	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
Communicates	21%	43%	36%
Stays on Task	14%	57%	29%
Contributes to Group	11%	36%	53%
Listens	11%	68%	21%
Understands Concepts	8%	46%	46%

January, 1994

Social Skill Assessed	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
Communicates	40%	45%	15%
Stays on Task	9%	41%	26%
Contributes to Group	30%	44%	26%
Listens	30%	67%	3%
Understands Concepts	22%	44%	34%

March, 1994

Social Skill Assessed	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
Communicates	57%	40%	3%
Stays on Task	47%	43%	10%
Contributes to Group	43%	43%	14%
Listens	33%	64%	3%
Understands Concepts	33%	60%	7%

Student reflective journals were included as a method of assessment. Students were asked to reflect upon the following areas of concern: the value of oral responses and should they be used for grades, oral preparation of certain tasks, class size in relation to making oral responses, working in pairs and/or groups of four, and their confidence (self-esteem) in giving oral responses. These reflective journals were collected three times.

Cooperative groups were formed weekly to enhance their social skills. Students were put into groups of four with desks facing each other. Some of the activities the groups were assigned were graded and others were not. This was by design for my intervention plan. The assignments were from the workbook and textbooks and covered a variety of assignments. Groups were sometimes graded. Students were informed if they were to receive a grade on the task before it was begun.

Colleague observation was utilized three times: at the onset, during, and at the conclusion of the intervention plan. The observer was present for approximately thirty minutes for each observation. The colleague is knowledgeable in Spanish. The class activities observed were the following: oral questions and answers covering the workbook section on verbs, a story from the textbook, and general information questions by the teacher in Spanish on weather, time, dates, personal information, math, and other class-related materials. The first and third observations were graded activities. The second observation involved an activity that was not graded. Figures two, three, and four indicate the number of students exhibiting these desired skills: understands question, gives quick response, response is grammatically correct, correct pronunciation, correct intonation, correct verb in response.

Figure 2
Summary of Students
Exhibiting Skills in a
Thirty Minute Class Time
November 1993

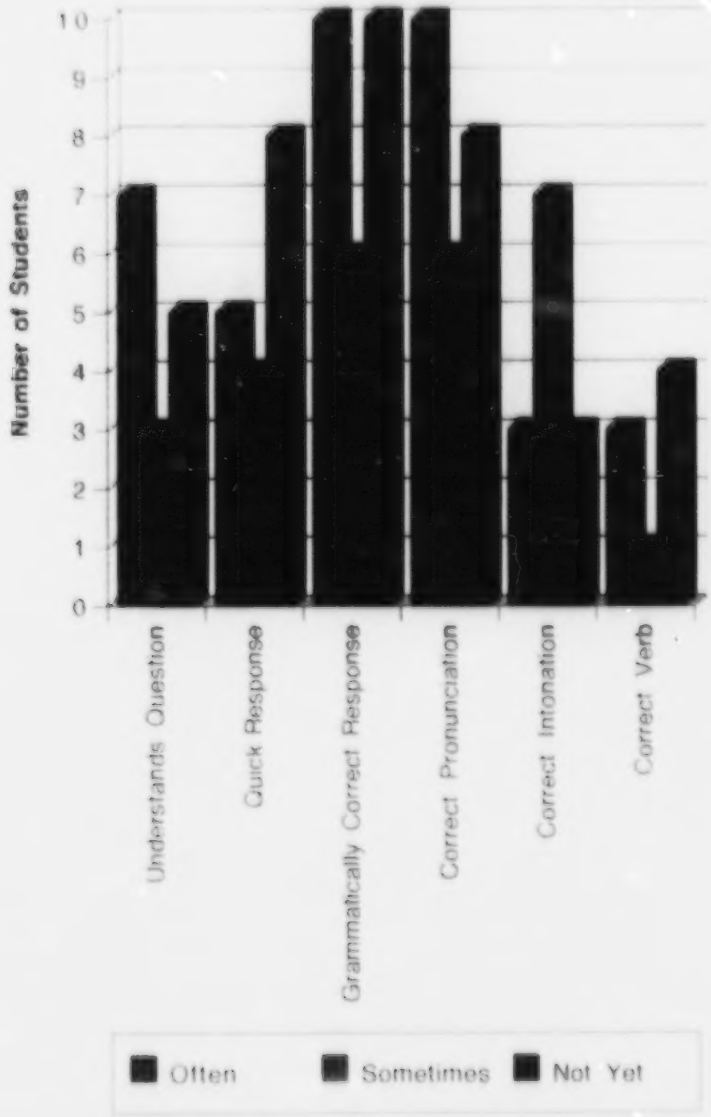


Figure 3
Summary of Students
Exhibiting Skills in a
Thirty Minute Class Time
January 1994

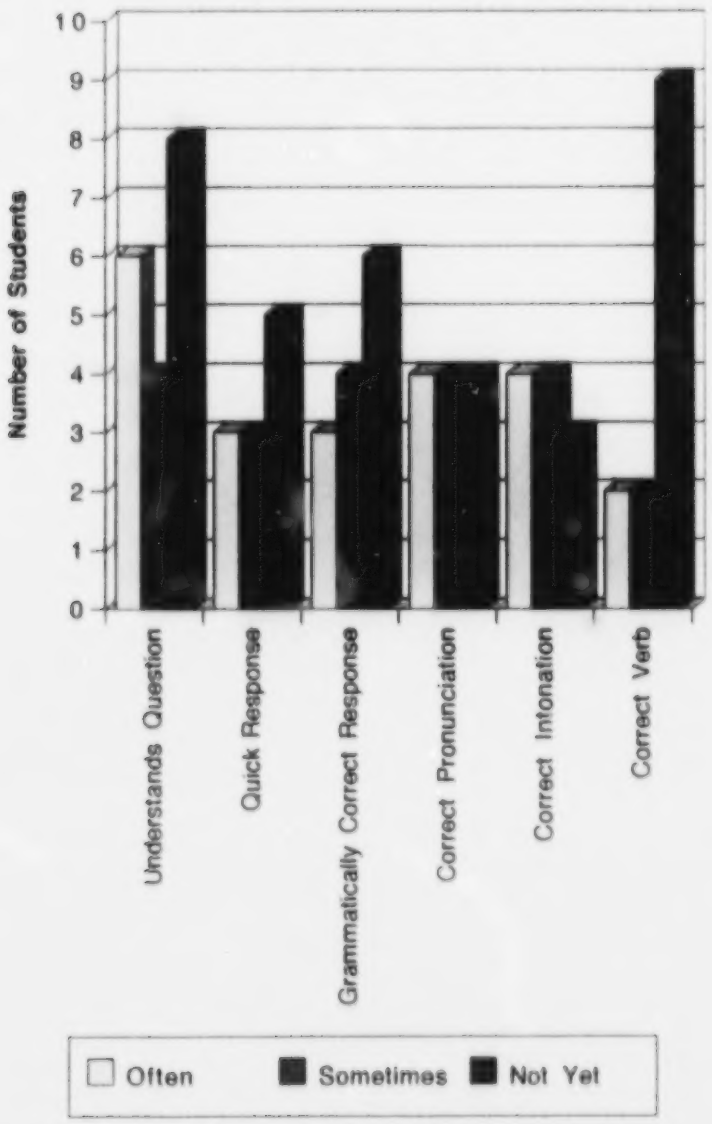
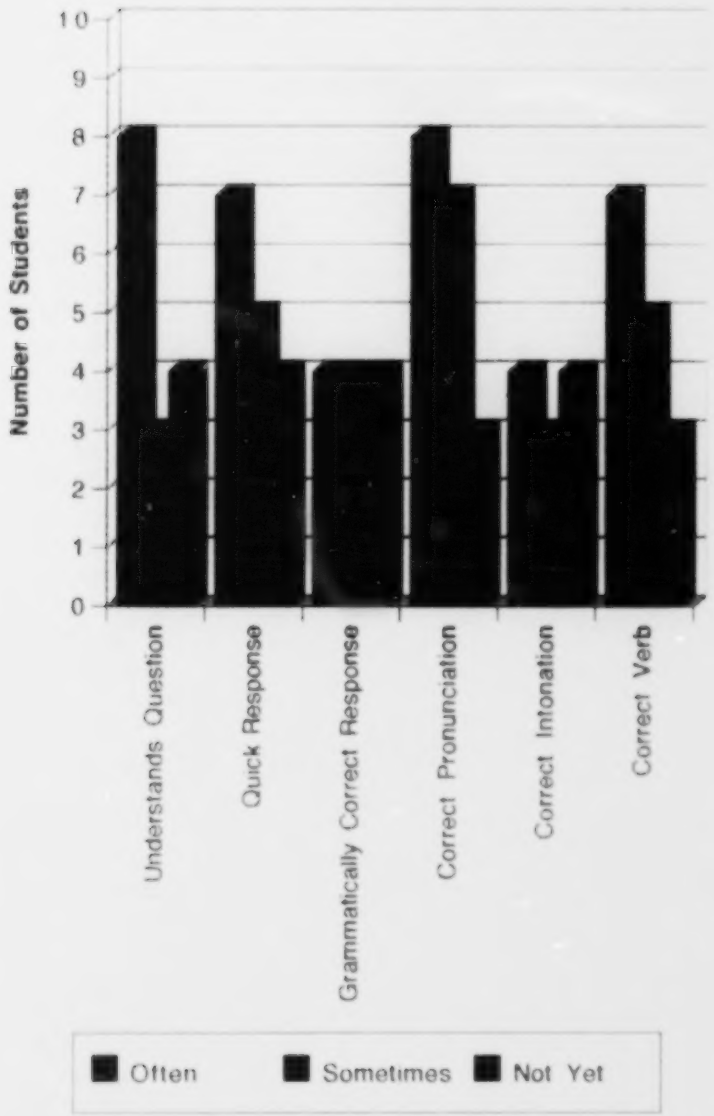


Figure 4
Summary of Students
Exhibiting Skills in a
Thirty Minute Class Time
March 1994



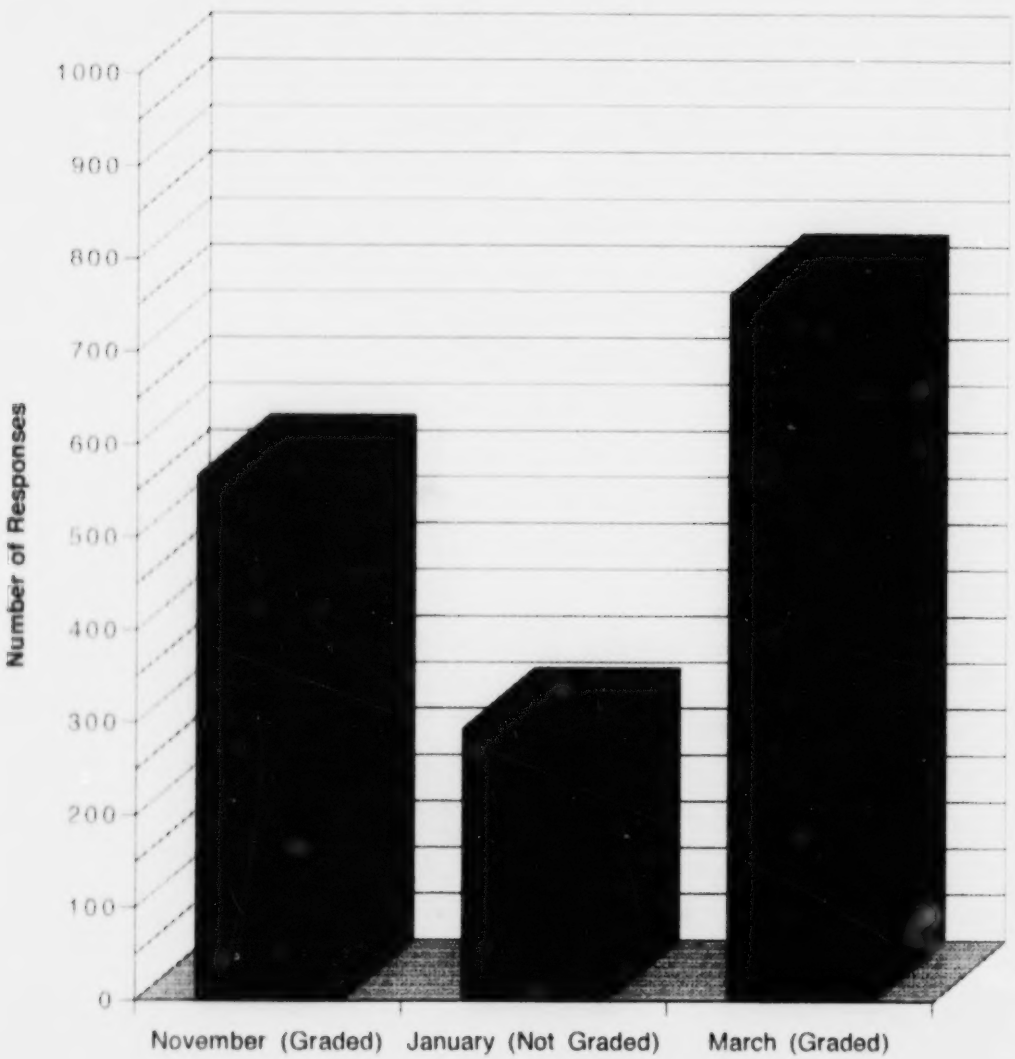
A journal of teacher strategies, student interviews, and reflections of these entries was used to evaluate the intervention plan. These entries were made after certain units were covered. The entries and reflections were not made as frequently as anticipated. However, they do reflect upon the same amount of material covered and the entire intervention plan.

Modeling was used to set a positive classroom environment. The type of desired responses expected and classroom procedures were explained. Cooperative groups were explained and what types of skills and behaviors were expected. Modeling was done also in the Spanish language to show proper inflection, intonation, and gesticulation. Students were also informed that to learn more effectively, they may feel somewhat uncomfortable at first with certain oral activities such as memorized conversations in front of class. Repetition of words, phrases, and reading passages took place three to four times weekly. This was done teacher-to-whole-class and student-to-student.

One extremely important addition to the implementation plan was that an individual daily response record was kept. These oral response sheets kept an accurate record of responses and were essential to my intervention plan. The oral response sheets (teacher-made) consisted of the students' names in Spanish followed by spaces for each day of the week and a small column for totaling each day's oral responses and a space at the end for a complete total for the entire week. It should be noted that these oral totals may cover a period of two to three weeks because oral responses are not recorded every day, depending upon the activity. A different student volunteers to mark points each day. These students also receive credit for being the recorder. Allowances are made for students who may be absent on such days. A system was devised to give students points for those days based on their performance on other days that they were in class. Part of the intervention plan consisted of marking oral responses for credit. The

second phase, students were informed that their oral responses would be recorded, but not used in figuring their grades. These sheets were used as a basis of comparison for motivation of response in a graded and a non-graded situation. Figure 5 indicates the number of responses.

Figure 5
Responses During Four
Fifty Minute Class Periods



Reflective Summary and Conclusions

The colleague observations revealed results which were of value. By the number of desired responses it appears that without the motivation of grades in most cases, all other conditions being equal, the results were not as successful during the second observation (of a non-graded situation). Observation checklists were implemented to mark the number of times work and social skills were observed. Comparing the three graphs, it is evident that the desired skills increased in most areas as the intervention plan progressed. During the January observation, however, a substantial decrease in frequency on task percentage was noted. This decrease is perhaps, due to the fact that it was a non-graded task. Most other percentages show a positive result. Individual oral response sheets were kept and Figure Five indicates a major response difference, when comparing the graded periods of responses with the non-graded, is clearly evident. The motivation of grades in this classroom setting appears to be a significant factor.

The following conclusions expressed here are based on colleague observation, feedback, graded and non-graded activities, student responses and reflections, oral response charts, cooperative groups, student interviews, and checklists. The terminal objectives states in Chapter Three have, for the most part, been accomplished. Students have improved in social and work skills, effort, and achievement. A variety of strategies was used and motivation seemed to increase. In most of the data presented, one common factor stands out: the motivation of grades is still an essential characteristic of this class when considering their performance and effort.

Chapter 6

Decision On The Future

The Solution Strategy

The data indicate improvement in motivational levels and suggest continuation of the implementation strategies. Lack of motivation within the classroom is of concern to most teachers, parents, and students. A collaborative effort involving these individuals to address low levels of motivation needs to occur within a comprehensive program. According to Brophy (1987, p. 40), "Students are more likely to want to learn when they appreciate the value of classroom activities and when they believe they will succeed if they apply reasonable effort." Teachers and parents alike need to portray effort as an investment which in turn will empower students and ensure success. Students will invest effort when success is achieved consistently. Consistent, successful achievement will be produced within a comprehensive program of meaningful objectives and appropriate levels of difficulty, through supportive environments.

A major focus of this intervention was to help students develop better self-concept by meeting students' needs and encouraging student progress. Self-motivation was the desired goal.

Additional Applications

In order to facilitate better self-concept, efforts should be taken to work collaboratively with professionals and to model behaviors that are related to effective instructional motivation strategies. Low-achieving students and individual students at high risk for behavioral problems should be identified. Programs should be designed to address their needs. Positive expectations will create positive feelings that enhance confidence and motivate students to work up

to their capacity. Students should be taught to set specific, yet challenging, short-term goals. Performance appraisals should provide appropriate feed-back to help students reorganize their success and reinforce their efforts.

Recommendations

The process and results of this intervention should be shared with colleagues, administrative officials, parents, and community. Input from these groups should be sought and time to evaluate their responses should be allocated. These data should then be used to establish sequential programs for developing and improving motivation. Funds should be available for staff to take courses in learning styles and teaching methods which address motivational issues. In addition to the training, instruction in Cooperative Learning techniques should help to produce a more effective classroom environment. Institutes, seminars, and in-service programs involving specialists within the field of motivation would serve to further enhance staff development. These events should be open to the community to provide awareness and to encourage involvement. Creating a support system that addresses staff needs would prove to be a valuable asset in the establishment of a successful motivation program. These plans should be presented to the Board of Education for consideration and funds should be sought for their implementation.

The action research project has confirmed, for me, the importance of motivation as it relates to education. Although student motivation to learn cannot be taught directly, it can be developed in students by teachers who utilize the strategies developed herein. There will be, no doubt, qualifications on the use of these strategies as well as further development of new strategies. Nevertheless, the action research project provides a basic set of strategies from which to choose when planning motivational elements within a given lesson. These strategies

remind educators that addressing students' needs plays an important role in their educational success. Students not only need meaningful and enjoyable activities, but, also the insight to appreciate the value in learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Teacher Questionnaire

1. Rate the approximate level of motivation of the students you teach.

1	2	3	4	5
very poor	poor	adequate	good	excellent

2. What characteristics of motivation do you perceive as deficient in the students you teach?

3. Estimate the amount of in-class aural-oral participation in which your average student engages during a one week time period.

   a. 10 to 20 mins.

   b. 20 to 30 mins.

   c. 30 to 40 mins.

4. Which areas of language instruction are difficult for students due to low levels of motivation?

Appendix B

4th Hour

Please answer the following questions in English:

1. Does working in pairs (or groups of 4) make it easier to learn Spanish sometimes?

   Yes No

   Explain:

2. If there were no oral points, would you volunteer as much as you do now? If not, how much less?

   10% Less 25% Less 50% Less Not At All

   Circle one and explain why.

3. Do you feel uncomfortable giving oral answers in class? Why or why not? Please explain.

Appendix C

How Are We Doing?

ATTRIBUTE:	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NOT YET
OBSERVABLE INDICATORS			

Appendix D

Observation Checklist

Teacher:_____ **Class:**_____ **Date:**_____

Target Skills:_____

Ratings:
+ = Frequently
✓ = Sometimes
o = Not yet

Names of Students						Comments
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
11.						
12.						
13.						
14.						
15.						

Appendix E

Student Interest Survey

Date:_____ Student Name:_____

1. The best movie I've recently seen is_____.
2. A reward I like to get is _____.
3. My two favorite TV programs are_____.
4. One thing I do very well is_____.
5. My favorite school subject is_____.
6. When I read for fun I like to read stories about_____

   _____.
7. If I had ten dollars, I'd spend it on_____.
8. When I have free time I like to_____.
9. I enjoy_____.
10. If I could go anywhere, I would go to_____ _____.
11. One of the things I like best about myself is_____.
12. A good thing my teacher could do for me is_____.
13. My favorite game is_____.
14. An important goal for me is to_____.
15. I know a lot about_____.
16. Sometimes I worry about_____.
17. I spend most of my money on_____.
18. The thing I most like to do with my friends is_____.
19. I like it when my parents give me_____.